

## 1. *Āmagandha Sutta* - The Refuge of Anti-Vegetarians .. or not!

See the English translation of the main discourse, many arguments for&against vegetarianism, and excellent paper on whole the topic in "*Āma,gandha Sutta, The "Raw-meat Stench" Discourse* / Sn 2.2/239-252/42-45; Theme: *You are not always what you eat*" (paper no.24), by Piya Tan, <http://dharmafarer.org> , 2004. Snippets:

- p.179 (PDF p.4) If one should still insist that *Āmagandha Sutta* "proves" that it is all right to take meat, then how would one reconcile the Buddha's admonition in the *Dhammika Sutta*:

*Pāṇaṃ na hane, na ca ghāṭayeyya  
na cānujaññā hanatāmparesaṃ*

Let one not destroy life, nor cause to kill,  
Nor indeed approve of killing by others.

(Sn 394)

- p.180 (PDF p.5) In his 5th Rock Edict, the Indian emperor Asoka prohibited the killing of certain animals, and in his 1st Pillar Edict he ordered only three animals be allowed for the emperor's table. In due course, this encouraged a vegetarian way of life in India, which has perhaps the world's most developed vegetarian cuisine.
- p.180 (PDF p.5) John Blofeld ... further argues, ancient books show that vegetarianism was unknown to India until the period when Buddhism swept over the country. Hindu scholars themselves admit that the practice was received from Buddhism, and there seems to be sufficient proof that Indian Buddhists in former days were strictly vegetarian, ...
- p.180 (PDF p.5) In modern times, animals are seldom specially killed for individuals. Yet it is clear that all of us are indeed responsible for their death, as the butchers supply meat according to our demand for it. It is therefore illogical and against the grain of the Dharma for any Buddhist to claim, under contemporary conditions, that one can eat meat as one is unaware that the slaughtering takes place for them.
- p.181 (PDF p.6) It is probable, considering all the nine Pali references given above, that the Buddha and the early monks ate very little meat and, even if they did, it was only incidental (*pavatta,maṃsa*). Xuanzang records in his travels that the early Hinayanist monks in China were allowed meat of animals that died of natural death and of animals killed by predators (Watters, London 1904, 1:53-56). The early Indian monks probably did the same.
- p.181 (PDF p.6) In conclusion, it should be said that a non-meat diet is not in itself a spiritual practice, but which entails many other wholesome qualities. The Buddhist training is the avoidance of taking life or causing pain to others (including oneself). We should create the conditions wherein a healthy non-meat or vegetarian life-style wherever or whenever possible.

Commentary to Āmagandha Sutta <sup>1</sup>	English translation by monk Saraṇa
<b>252.</b> <i>Evaṃ bhagavā paramatthato āmagandhaṃ vissajjetvā duggatimaggabhāvañcassa pakāsetvā</i>	252. Thus the Blessed One explain what is "smell of raw flesh", propounded (various kinds of) path (that leads to) bad birth (/birth in states of woe),
<i>idāni yasmim macchamaṃsabhojane tāpaso āmagandhasaññi duggatimaggasaññi ca hutvā</i>	(and) now, when the ascetic had the perception of "smell of raw flesh" (as well as) the path to bad birth, in eating fish and meat,
<i>tassa abhojanena suddhikāmo hutvā taṃ na bhuñjati,</i>	(he) doesn't eat it (/fish and meat) because of the desire to purify (himself) through not eating it (/fish and meat).
<i>tassa ca aññassa ca tathāvidhassa sodhetuṃ asamatthabhāvaṃ dassento "na macchamaṃsa"nti imaṃ chappadaṃ gāthamāha.</i>	(The Buddha therefore) spoke these six verses (including) "not fish (and) meat" showing the unsuccessful nature of purification (from suffering) by this (i.e. not eating fish and meat) and other ways as well.
<i>Tattha sabbapadāni antimapādena yojetabbāni – na macchamaṃsaṃ sodheti maccaṃ avitiṇṇakaṃkhaṃ,</i>	Therefore all the verses should be connected to the final verse – (not eating?) fish (and) meat do not purify a being who is not (yet) free from doubt (about the Right Path),
<i>na āhutiyaññamutūpasevanā sodheti maccaṃ avitiṇṇakaṃkhanti evaṃ.</i>	Dedicating (oneself) to rites and rituals do not purify a being who is not (yet) free from doubt (about the Right Path).
<i>Ettha ca na macchamaṃsanti akhādiyamānaṃ macchamaṃsaṃ na sodheti,</i>	There "not fish (and) meat" (means that it) does not purify those who do not eat fish (and) meat,
<i>tathā anāsakattanti evaṃ porāṇā vaṇṇenti.</i>	And fasting as well - thus the elders ( <i>porāṇā</i> ) explain. <sup>2</sup>

Pāli original – <i>Sn 2.2. Āmagandha Sutta, v.252</i>	English translation by Piya Tan (p.183, PDF p.8) <sup>3</sup>
“Na <b>macchamaṃsānāmanāsakattaṃ</b> [na macchamaṃsaṃ na anāsakattaṃ ( <i>sī. aṭṭha mūlapāṭho</i> ),	Neither <b>meat nor fish, nor fasting</b> . Nor nakedness, nor a <b>shaven head</b> , matted hair nor dirt,

<sup>1</sup> *Suttanipāta-Atthakathā – 2. Cūlavaggo – 2. Āmagandhasuttavannanā*

<sup>2</sup> However, the verbatim translation Pāli-Burmese translates this as "Old teachers say, that the state of one's not eating fish (and) meat does not purify." (Pāli-Burmese old unnamed verbatim translation for *Suttanipāta* Commentary, vol.2, p.260 (PDF p.260). ) I believe that the word "*tathā*" introduces a different member of the sentence, a different meaning. It seems this is not a view followed by the Burmese translators. According to the Pāli-English dictionary of the Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyanā Tipiṭaka program (v.4.0), "*anāsakā*" means "fasting".

<sup>3</sup> "*Āmagandha Sutta, The "Raw-meat Stench" Discourse | Sn 2.2/239-252/42-45; Theme: You are not always what you eat*" (paper no.24), by Piya Tan, <http://dharmafarer.org> , 2004

<i>na maṃcchamaṃsānānāsakattaṃ (syā. ka.)), na naggiyaṃ na <b>muṇḍiyaṃ</b> jaṭājallaṃ;</i> <i>Kharājīnāni nāggihuttassupasevanā, ye vāpi loke amaraḥ bahū tapā;</i> <i>Mantāhuti yaññamutūpasevanā, sodhenti maccaṃ avitīṇṇakaṇkhaṃ.</i>	Nor donning rough garments of animal skin, nor tending the sacred fire, Nor even the many penances done in the world for eternal life, Nor mantras and offerings, nor sacrifices and seasonal feasts, Will purify a mortal who has not crossed beyond spiritual doubt.
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Most of Theravāda monks today have shaven head, and nobody questions it. It is however not a Vinaya rule, that head is "shaven" (here rather "bald", *muṇḍa*), because according to the Vinaya rules, hair even up to two finger breadth long are allowable for *bhikkhus*, the Buddha's disciples. We can see how diligently many monks try to keep their head bald, even though it is not required by Vinaya – even though it is directly discouraged as "purification" practice by the Buddha Himself, as we can see from the translation above. Indeed, just like in the case of monk's vegetarian diet, monks do not shave their head in order to purify themselves. As we learn from *Milindapañhā*, monks shave their head for 16 (sixteen) reasons:

<i>Milindapañhā - 1. Bāhirakathā – Pubbayogādi – par.12</i>	English translation by I.B. Horner <sup>4</sup>
“ <i>Kiṃkāraṇā, mārisa, kesā te na yathā aññesa’nti?</i> ”	"Why is your hair, dear sir, not as that of other men?"
“ <i>Soḷasime, dāraka, palibodhe disvā kesamassuṃ ohāretvā pabbajito. ‘Katame soḷasa’?</i> ”	"When one has cut off the hair and the beard one goes forth, boy, after seeing these sixteen impediments. What sixteen?"
“ <i>Alaṅkārapalibodho maṇḍanapalibodho</i>	The impediment of ornamenting oneself, the impediment of decking oneself out,
<i>telamakkhanapalibodho dhovanapalibodho</i>	Of smearing oneself with oil, of shampooing oneself,
<i>mālāpalibodho gandhapalibodho</i>	Of using garlands, of using scents,
<i>vāsanapalibodho harīṭakapalibodho</i>	Of using unguents, of using yellow myrobalan,
<i>āmalakapalibodho raṅgapalibodho</i>	Of using emblic myrobalan, of using dyes,
<i>bandhanapalibodho kocchapalibodho</i>	Of using ribbons, of using combs,
<i>kappakapalibodho vijaṭanapalibodho, ūkāpalibodho,</i>	The impediment of barbers, of disentangling (curls), the impediment of vermin.
<i>kesesu vilūnesu socanti kilamanti paridevanti urattāḷiṃ kanti sammohaṃ āpajanti,</i>	When their hair falls out people are grieved, they mourn and lament, they beat their breasts and fall into disillusion.
<i>imesu kho, dāraka, soḷasasu palibodhesu paliguṇṭhitā manussā sabbāni atisukhumāni sippāni nāsentī’ti.</i>	Impeded by these sixteen impediments, boy, men expel all the subtlest crafts."

Thus we can clearly see, how beneficial it is for monks when they shave their head, and that it is not done with the purpose of religious purification – at least not as an unavoidable practice. Vegetarian diet is not followed with the purpose of purification either. There are however many reasons why not eating meat is beneficial, just like there are many reasons why shaving head is beneficial.

See yet another little document, "*Cow Dhamma*" by ven. Ledi Sayādaw, Aggamahāpaṇḍita, D.Litt., which emphasized the need of gratitude to cattle for the milk and service that they provide to human. It gives a number of arguments against eating meat and fish in general too. Snippets:

- p.8 (PDF p.12) Meat-eaters do not possess the factors of gratitude and compassion, and they are far from becoming good persons. The deed of eating is not a profound act. What is significant though, with grave consequences, is the financial help given to the slaughter-houses and meat-suppliers. The suppliers can maintain their businesses due to the purchasing power of the meat-

<sup>4</sup> "Milinda's Questions Volume I", I.B. Horner, Luzac & Company, Ltd., London, 1969; pp.15-16.

eaters. Butchers kill more and more animals to meet the increasing demand, day and night. This fact is known to all.

- p.9 (PDF p.13) In the Vinaya Piṭaka, meat-eating is allowed if the right kind of meat is given. The observance of the Vinaya rules is limited for it purifies only bodily and vocal misconduct. It does yet reach the sphere of purification of mental evils which encompass a wide range. In the Sutta Piṭaka, ethical precepts and practices reach the mental realm. It covers all mental evils. Only when mental evils are purified, goodness arises. A person now becomes good, not merely moral or ethical. This attainment is possible because the factors of gratitude, loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy, and equanimity prevail in the heart. The heart must be cleansed of evil things to become good.
- p.11 (PDF p.15) Those who hold *Khattavijja Diṭṭhi* think that the end justifies the means. They have a selfish outlook, and only pragmatic considerations of usefulness or benefit prevail. Meat-eaters also belong to this group.
- p.12 (PDF p.16) Soon after a child is born, parents feed it beef, chicken, etc., so people enjoy meat, instead of loathing it. Similarly, if there were such a custom, people would eat their own father and mother with relish, or they would enjoy the flesh of their own sons and daughters. Once any food becomes familiar, even the flesh of dogs becomes taste. The power of lust has no limits. Lust for food, like lust for sensual pleasures, continually wants to try new dishes. Man can become as lustful as a dog. The unrestrained carnal lust for sex and food is obvious in animals. The root cause is lust, with no special distinction between men and animals.

The Commentary to *Kuṇāla Jātaka* (536) seems to indicate that making use of strong drink is *on par* with making use of meat.. at least in the case of women (!) –

<u><i>Jātaka</i> 536<sup>5</sup></u>	English translation by E.B. Cowell, <sup>6</sup> edited by monk Saraṇa
<i>353 "Natthi tāsam vinayo na saṃvaro,</i>	They (i.e. women) have no discipline, no restraint,
<i>majjamaṃsanirātā [majjamaṃsābhirātā (ka.)] asaññātā;</i>	Enjoying alcoholic drinks and meat, frivolous,
<i>Tā gilanti purisassa pābhataṃ,</i>	They (i.e. women) swallow the wealth of the man (i.e. their husband),
<i>sāgareva makaraṃ timiṅgalo [timiṅgilo (sī. pī.).]</i>	Just like the (fabled monster called) <i>timiṅgala</i> (would,) in the ocean.

Finally, the problem of eating meat spans also to the next lives – as a habit. If one eats meat whole their life, it is possible, that upon animal birth they will be born as a carnivorous (meat-eating) animal, causing a lot of demerit by killing living beings. On the other hand, for vegetarians – even if they are born as animals – they are born as vegetarian animals, safe from breaking the first precept of *pānātipātā*, and thus keeping their opportunity open for birth in a higher realm.

<sup>5</sup> *Jātakapāli* – 21. *Asītinipāto* – 4(536). *Kuṇāla Jātaka* (this is not from Commentary, it is the main text. It is then repeated again in its Commentary)

<sup>6</sup> "The *Jātaka* or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births", E.B. Cowell, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 2006; p.244 .

## 2. Burmese Buddhism Coming to France

Below is my English translation of Ma May Thu Khine's transcription of the original recording, where Ma Phyu Wint Yee interviews a sayadaw in Sagaing.

"Three aspects, that means (the teacher) can teach also the *vipassanā* meditation. Foreigners, those (are who) ask extraordinary questions. For example, "catching fish is a work helpful for gaining concentration (*samādhi*). Meditation is also a work of right concentration (*sammā samādhi*). It's same. (According to) you (, the teacher,) what is different?" That kind (of thing). Even if such (questions) are asked stubbornly (however, how come all of them would make sense, right?) (the teacher) must be a person who can answer (them).

Even if (the teacher) can't (speak) French, (he) should learn as much as possible. However, English is most important. It must be mastered (/ (One) should be able to (speak in English).) English language should be mastered (/ "able"). French language should be mastered (/ "able"). (The teacher) should be a person who can receive a question about *vipassanā*. Then, (the teacher) should be over 50 years (old). At least 50, indeed. That is because if (the monk) comes to France when young, there is a worry (he) will disrobe (/ "leave to lay (life)"). (In France) there is immensely much of entertainment. There are many worldly problems. Also in the East – Laos, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam – monks disrobe (/ "leave") in crowds. That is why (the teacher) should be over 50 (years) of age. However, when I (/ "the monk") got involved in it (i.e. teaching meditation), (I) was just 43 years (old). As an exception, indeed. The remaining aspects were fulfilled. The three aspects were complete. Three kinds of asking. Human (body) also short, not fat, (just) like now. As for being also tiny, (I'd have to) go and take (what would be needed) if they (i.e. the students) asked to give this (or that). However, speaking in the modern words, in deed, "it's not that difficult to digest."

Even though (I) know that others (/i.e. the non-Buddhist people of the region) (will) not quite appreciate (my) arrival, there is a benefit. (I) have to show how (much I) try. Even when (just) staying, others have greater respect (for me) when (I) show an extraordinary way of staying, (following) Vinaya in detail, and also not to be greedy for gain (/ "possession"), not to be infatuated (with gain). When (the people) have respect (for the monks), they donate (/ "keep") monasteries etc. (for them). After that, when the French monasteries are made available (/ "kept"), after I have attended French schools, there are 4, 5, 3, etc. Monasteries of the Thais, Lao, Cambodia (/Khmer), Sri Lanka (/Sinhalese), (and) Vietnamese (people). As for the Myanmars, (to answer) why are the Myanmars so poor, (see) from the foreign countries there are (monasteries), even from Thailand, (and) from all of the (other) four countries (as mentioned above). As for us (/ "oneself"), there is not (a single monastery yet). I try (hard, remembering that) there is still no (monastery) from Myanmar, which is the country where the Theravāda Buddhist Dispensation thrives (/ "shines") most. It's been whole eight years that (I) try, (and) a large monastery appeared (there). Now there has appeared a great Myanmar monastery in France. Appeared, (that means) since April 2012 that great monastery appeared. A Buddha/pagoda to be kept in (/ "on") this monastery ..

Q: As for meditation retreats here [in Myanmar? In France?], how do (you) conduct (them), venerable sir?

**A:** As for meditation retreats, there are invitations even from houses (of lay people). There are also (people) who follow (into) the monastery and meditate. If (I) am invited to a house, (I) go. Even if there are (just) two (people), (I) go. (Or) just three. Although (one) is known as doing meditation retreats abroad (/outside Myanmar), it is just like this even when (the famous) Chan Myeik Sayadaw goes (to teach meditation abroad). There are so many, right? Even ten people, nine people are there, indeed. Sometimes there are about three. (I) have to go and take (the situation) with this frequency (of people's attendance). It's possible (for them) to come to my monastery. Now, so far, it has even become my own monastery. Later, after spreading (the information), (more people) will meditate.

**Q:** When (you) come like that, are those people who meditate (from) Myanmar? (Or) Asian people?

**A:** Myanmar people are rare (there). It is not yet possible for me to eat meals sent (and) offered by the Myanmar. In France the Myanmar are not as (many as) the English, Canadians, (or) Japanese. There are (some), though. (However) as rare as (if) not at all.

**Q:** After the venerable sir (/you) have been so intimate/close and spreading the (Buddhist) Dispensation, how do you feel your foreigners have progressed (/“arrived to”)?

**A:** There is very much (of progress). There are also those who changed into (/converted to) Buddhism. Even my book is no more available (i.e. there are no more copies available, all distributed). (I) had a book called "Life and Religion" (/“Life and Dispensation”/“Life and Buddhism”/“Life and Sāsana”). If (one) buys and reads that book, (one) can learn information about me and about all the works that I undertake.

**Q:** Is the (book) available here, venerable sir?

**A:** Now (it) is not available anywhere. Giving it to this person, giving it to that person, (the book) is no more available. However, it may be possible to buy (it). At the offering of (title) Aggamahāpaṇḍita Dhammācariya in the month Dabodwe, there is an extra event of honoring the exemplary work of monks in this country, my (book) "Life and Religion" (is available). (The event) is arranged (to be) huge. There (my book) "Life and Religion" is distributed.

**Q:** We are making a book, venerable sir. It is a guide book, indeed. It is a book written ("intending") for the foreigners who want to meditate. (I) myself will go to meditation centers and give (the book there). In this kind of books, what is the advice that you (/“venerable sir”) would like (/“want”) to give to the foreigners who will visit Myanmar? What do (you) want to say, venerable sir?

**A:** I don't have anything particular (to say in this case). Later (I) will tell (you), after (I) think (about it). (I) don't want to say right away (without thinking first).


Indeed, a meditation guide for yogis. What should (they) do. What should (they) do. Later each one will be satisfied.

Introduce (me) to the venerable Indara (/Indaka?), venerable sir. (He) is from Myaung Mya (မေတ္တမြား), venerable sir. (He) is 78 or 76 (years old). Also, (he) is very sick (/“complete in illnesses”).

I am unfortunately not sure what is the name of the sayadaw, nor what is the place in France where he established his Burmese monastery. I searched for a Burmese monastery in France, but I didn't find anything certain.

In <http://theravada.fr/> there are these two places that might provide the visitors with the Theravāda teachings in the Burmese style:

 **Centre Vipassana Sakyamuni** (Theravada Sri Lanka et Birmanie : lignée de Mahasi Sayadaw )  
33 allée Emile-Gemton – Monbéon  
89340 Saint-Agnan  
Tél. 03.86.96.19.44  
site Internet : <http://sakyamuni-vipassana.fr/>

 **Vipassanasangha** (Theravada Birmanie – lignée Mahasi Sayadaw )  
9 place Georges Pompidou  
93160 Noisy le Grand  
site Internet : <http://vipassanasangha.free.fr/>

I have also found these two contacts:

1. U Kumara  
Association Bouddhiste Birmane  
63 Avenue Maurice Thorez 94200 Ivry sur seine  
France.  
Tel: 33 (0) 146717240, 33 (0) 677463943 - Google Search
2. Association Bouddhique, Sakyamuni  
Montbeon 89340, Saint Agnon,  
France; (Ven. U Vijaya)

May all beings be happy ☺  
mnich Saraṇa